

Human Capital & Military Capability

The Cases of Britain and Argentina in
the Falklands / Malvinas War of 1982

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by

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Abstract

Human capital is a concept that remains underappreciated and mismanaged by many defence and military organizations around the world. Such behaviour is misguided and detrimental to national defence. As this paper argues, human capital can be a necessary source of military capability. More specifically, human capital can fundamentally affect military capability by direct and indirect means. To support the above argument the present paper relies on evidence from two related case studies: Britain and Argentina in the Falklands War of 1982. The analysis of each case reveals that while a deficit of human capital can cripple military capability, a surplus in human capital can significantly enhance military power.

Contents

Introduction	1
I. Case Study of Britain	11
II. Case Study of Argentina	30
Conclusion.....	50
Bibliography	54

Introduction

Appropriate talent is needed at all levels if
distinguished service is to be performed.¹

– Carl von Clausewitz, Prussian General

Human capital has often been undervalued and mismanaged by defence and military organizations throughout the world, even in recent times among advanced Western nations. The term human capital refers to ‘the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organization or country’.² To illustrate, in the United States (US), a survey conducted in 2005 of 250 graduates from the US Military Academy at West Point found that 82% of respondents, in active duty, believed that half or more of the best officers leave the American military early rather than serve a full career.³ In the United Kingdom (UK), the capacity of the military leadership for handling counterinsurgencies has recently come under strong criticism.⁴ In developing countries, more extreme situations have been observed. For example, during the Gulf War of 1991, Iraq had few army divisions that were considered ‘competent’ by US intelligence, its air force pilots were judged ‘poor’ and its best performing generals were either retired, dead or under arrest.⁵

The underappreciation and misuse of human capital by defence and military organizations is imprudent and conducive to weak national defence. As this paper will argue, human capital can be a necessary source of military capability (or military power), i.e. a deficit of human capital can jeopardize military capability, while a surplus

¹ Clausewitz (1984), pp. 110-111.

² Oxford University (2013).

³ Kane (2011).

⁴ Ledwidge (2011), pp. 6, 262.

⁵ Freedman and Karsh (1991) p. 23.

of human capital can generate significant military power. To be clear, this paper does not claim that human capital is, by itself, a sufficient source of military capability – other factors, such as funds, technology, headcount etc, may also be of importance.

For the purpose of this paper, military capability is defined as follows. Offensive military capability is the capacity to eliminate ‘the largest possible defensive force over the largest possible territory for the smallest attacker casualties in the least time’.⁶ Defensive military capability is ‘the ability to preserve the largest possible defensive force over the largest possible territory with the greatest attacker casualties for the longest time’.⁷ These definitions are particularly useful because they allow military capability to be measured in terms of casualties, equipment losses, time and space.

Moreover, this paper utilizes (and expands upon) a theoretical framework, that has been commonly adopted by several prominent theorists on military capability,⁸ to argue more specifically that human capital can fundamentally affect military capability through direct and indirect routes. Regarding the former, the paper will contend that human capital can directly affect military capability by itself or by interacting with other basic resources of a state, e.g. equipment or technology. Regarding the latter, the paper will argue that human capital can generate activities (defined in Table 1) that can impact military effectiveness which, in turn, can determine military capability. Diagram 1 illustrates these interconnections.

⁶ Biddle (2006), p. 6.

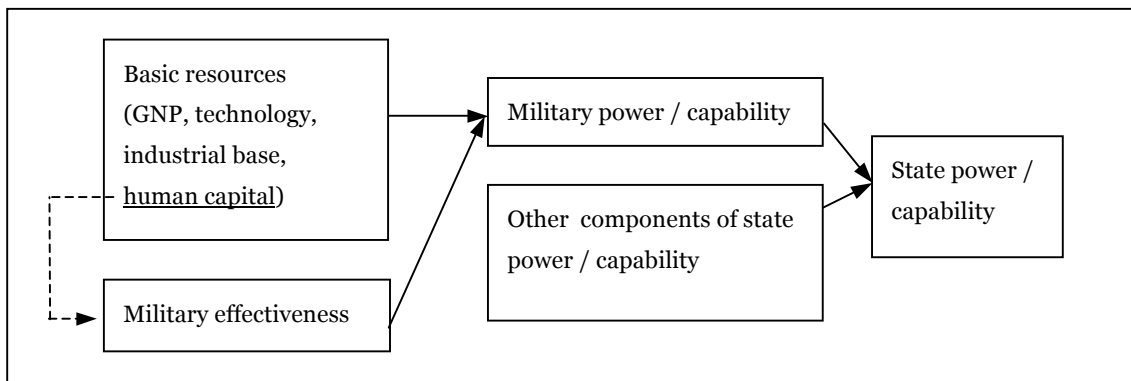
⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸ Brooks (2007a), Locations 80-317.

Table 1. Activities that can Impact Military Effectiveness.⁹

Activity	Definition
Strategic assessment	The process whereby top military and political leaders consult with one another, analyze policy options, and otherwise participate in decision making about strategy prior to or during an interstate conflict
Strategic command and control	The process by which the political leadership and upper echelons of the military hierarchy communicate, coordinate, and transmit decisions down the chain of command
Tactical command and control	The process whereby units actually engaged with opposing forces communicate with one another and coordinate their activities
Intelligence	The process whereby militaries collect, analyse, and disseminate information about the capabilities of other states
Logistics	The activity of organizing the movement, equipment, and accommodation of troops
Diplomacy	The activity of managing international relations

Diagram 1. Human Capital and Military Capability.¹⁰



In accordance with the referred framework, military effectiveness is defined as the capacity to make good use of a state's basic resources in wealth, technology and people.¹¹ It is measured in terms of four attributes: quality, skill, responsiveness and integration.¹² Quality refers to the 'ability [of a military] to provide itself with highly capable weapons and equipment'.¹³ Skill 'reflects the degree to which military personnel

⁹ Not an exhaustive list. Table based on definitions in Brooks (2007a), Locations 280-321, and Oxford University (2013).

¹⁰ Diagram in Brooks (2007a), Location 84. Alterations to original: dotted arrow added, 'human capital' underlined.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Location 148.

¹² *Ibid.*, Locations 146-151.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Location 195.

are, in the broadest sense, both capable and willing as they undertake difficult and complex tasks essential to preparing for and executing war'.¹⁴ Responsiveness refers to 'a military's capacity to respond to new information about itself, its adversary, and its environment'.¹⁵ Integration refers to 'the degree to which different military activities are internally consistent and mutually reinforcing'.¹⁶

To support the aforementioned argument, the present paper relies on evidence from two case studies: Britain and Argentina in the Falklands / Malvinas War of 1982. In both cases evidence is derived mostly from primary sources in the form of personal accounts, interviews, declarations, letters and telegrams by military personnel and civilians from Britain, Argentina and the US who were involved in the war.¹⁷ Secondary sources are also utilized in supplementary manner.

The referred case studies were chosen mainly for two reasons. Firstly, they provide favorable conditions for testing the connection between human capital and military capability. While the balance of human capital was mostly in favor of one belligerent (Britain), neither side had an excessive advantage in terms of other basic resources that are often attributed as direct causes of military power, e.g. funds, headcount and technology. Both nations spent similar sums in the war (US\$1.5 - 2 billion).¹⁸ Where headcount mattered most – on the ground in the islands – Britain and Argentina fielded, respectively, 10,000 and 13,000 troops.¹⁹ In terms of major armaments used in the war, Britain relied on more ships, helicopters and ground vehicles, but the latter were unsuitable for the soft hilly terrain of the islands.²⁰ Additionally Argentina had more aircraft (Table 2). And while Britain possessed more modern ships and aircraft in general,²¹ the Argentine Air Force (FAA) and Air Fleet

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Location 192.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Location 168.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Location 153.

¹⁷ None of the interviews were conducted by the author himself.

¹⁸ Goldblat and Millán (1983), pp. 21-22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

Arm (CANA) made use of dozens of sophisticated US, French and Israeli combat aircrafts.²²

Table 2. Major Armaments Directly Involved in Military Operations (Estimates).²³

Major Armaments	United Kingdom	Argentina
Aircraft carriers	2	1
Surface warships	60	10
Submarines	6	3
Aircraft	42	102
Helicopters	200	32
Armoured vehicles	16	12

Moreover, both sides were (mostly) in similar conditions regarding other possible sources of military effectiveness indicated by the literature on military power, e.g. clear foreign threat, nationalism, social cohesion and adequate civil-military relations.²⁴ Britain and Argentina faced clear threats from the Soviet Union and Chile, respectively.²⁵ There was no elevated discrepancy in nationalism between the two countries, such as between Japan and other nations in World War II (WWII).²⁶ Neither nation suffered deep social skisms. Argentina, which was ruled by a Military Junta, did have dysfunctional civil-military relations, unlike Britain. The literature suggests that inadequate civil-military relations may erode military effectiveness in a number of ways, but it also indicates that one such way is the politicization of appointments, i.e. the production of a human capital deficit.²⁷ Moreover, much of the evidence presented in this paper will demonstrate that human capital can affect military capability independently from considerations of civil-military relations.

Secondly, the Falklands / Malvinas War was characterized as a modern (electronic) war that required conventional and joint operations in a maritime setting,

²² Grove (2005), p. 268.

²³ Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 10.

²⁴ Brooks (2007c), Locations 3,269-3,301.

²⁵ Armitage in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 23; Tripodi (2003), p. 112.

²⁶ Reiter (2007).

²⁷ Biddle and Zirkle (1996), p. 198; Brooks (2007b), Location 1,519; Santibañes (2007), p. 620.

and which involved a third world nation. Hence, the conflict may still be of considerable relevance for contemporary and future conflicts, particularly those with one or more similar characteristics.

Regarding scope, the analyses of the two case studies focus on the period between the opening and closing of major armed hostilities (2 April - 14 June 1982). However, some relevant preliminary events in the months prior to 2 April are also contemplated. Furthermore, mindful that 'there will always be other (equally) important battles being waged consecutively with the soldiers'/sailors' battle on the ground',²⁸ the case studies contemplate the human capital of both military and civilian personnel involved in the war.

As for the literature available on the present paper's topic, the concepts of military effectiveness, military capability and human capital in the military have been analysed at some length by various scholars from the fields of Sociology, Operations Research, Military History, Political Science and Economics.²⁹ However, the connections between human capital and military effectiveness and capability is still relatively underexplored.³⁰ Exceptions include the works of Biddle, on skills and performance in land battles;³¹ Dixon, David and Ledwidge on military incompetence;³² and Benmelech and Berrebi on human capital and the destructiveness of suicide bombers.³³ Yet, as Biddle acknowledges, 'much remains to be done'.³⁴

The present paper contributes to the above literature by providing broader insights into the connections between human capital and military capability. It does this by considering both direct and indirect links between the two concepts and by contemplating the human capital of not only military personnel of land, sea and air services, but also of civilian officials.

²⁸ Nott (2002), p. 307.

²⁹ See literature review in Brooks (2007a), Locations 80-138; Millett *et al.* (2010); Hinkle, *et al.* (1999); Kane (2012).

³⁰ See literature review in Biddle (2007), Locations 2,973-3,010.

³¹ Biddle (2006 and 2007).

³² Dixon (1994), David (1997), Ledwidge (2011).

³³ Benmelech and Berrebi (2007).

³⁴ Biddle (2007), Location 3,131.

The more specific issue of human capital in the Falklands War also remains underexplored. Exceptions include the works of Santibañes and Stewart.³⁵ The former argues that the Argentine military lost core skills and, consequently, effectiveness through politicization.³⁶ The latter contends that poor unit cohesion (or morale) among Argentine land forces led to poor combat performance.³⁷ The inverse argument is made regarding Britain.³⁸ However, unlike the present paper, Santibañes does not consider the British case and Stewart does not contemplate a wide range of skills, knowledge and experiences, nor personnel beyond ground troops.

The present paper is structured in two parts. Part I analyses evidence from the British case study. Part II similarly explores the Argentine case. A conclusion follows at the end. However, prior to any analyses, for the purpose of clarity, a brief background on the Falklands / Malvinas War is presented below.³⁹

BACKGROUND

The Falklands / Malvinas are an archipelago in the South Atlantic Ocean near the South American continent (Map 1). The climate in the islands is humid and cold and the terrain is hilly with few trees and roads.⁴⁰ In the early 1980s, the islands were inhabited by approximately 1,800 people of mostly British origin, known as Kelpers, most of which were dedicated to sheep breeding.⁴¹ The Falklands / Malvinas and their dependencies (South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands) have been governed by Britain, and diplomatically disputed by Argentina, since 1833.⁴²

³⁵ Santibañes (2007) and Stewart (1991).

³⁶ Santibañes (2007), p. 620.

³⁷ Stewart (1991), pp. 132-135.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

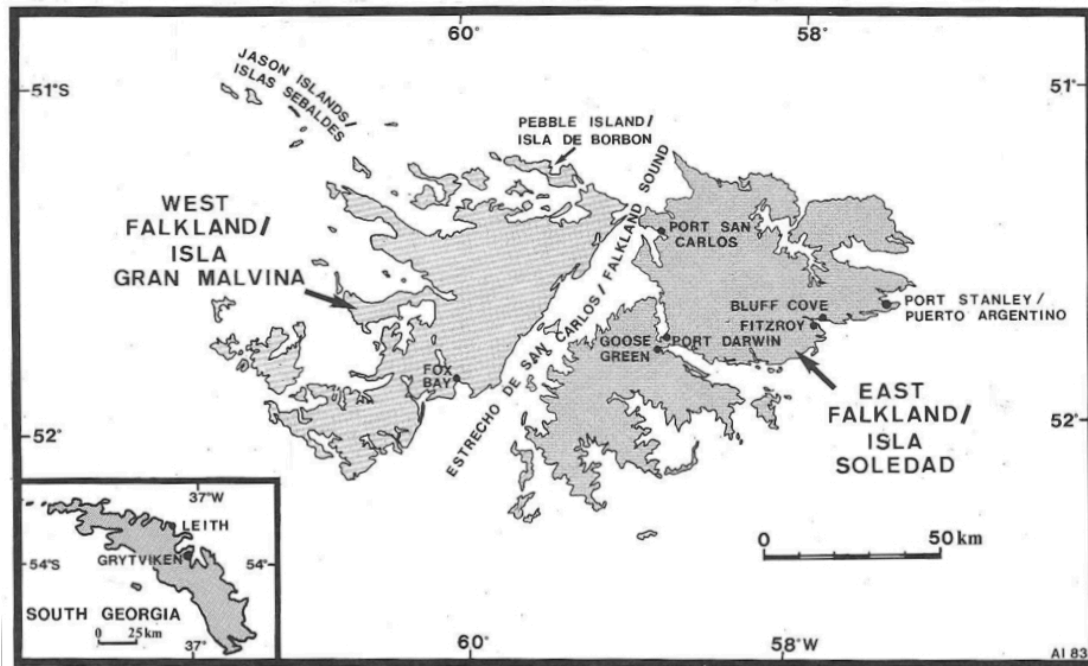
³⁹ The background section of this paper uses dates and events in Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Appendix A, except where otherwise specified.

⁴⁰ Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁴² Hime (2010), p. 1.

Map 1. Falklands / Malvinas and South Georgia.⁴³



In 2 April 1982 Argentine forces invaded (or recovered) the islands successfully through Operation Rosario. This act of force has been attributed to a number of factors, including: growing nationalism in Argentina,⁴⁴ stalled diplomatic negotiations,⁴⁵ a desire by Argentine authorities to divert attention from internal economic problems,⁴⁶ and the 1981 UK Defence Review which planned a drastic reduction in Royal Navy (RN) resources.⁴⁷ However, the catalyst for war, as recognized by Leopoldo Galtieri, Argentine President and Commander-in-Chief of the Army during the war, was an incident involving Constantino Davidoff, an Argentine scrap-metal merchant.⁴⁸ Davidoff's ship crew landed in South Georgia in 19 March 1982 without British permission and raised an Argentine flag, thereby elevating diplomatic tensions.⁴⁹

⁴³ Reproduced from Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Santibañes (2007), p. 616.

⁴⁵ Hore (2005), p. 214.

⁴⁶ Hime (2010), p. 1.

⁴⁷ Leach (2005), p. 65.

⁴⁸ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 691.

⁴⁹ Hime (2010), pp. 2, 57.

The British were surprised by Operation Rosario.⁵⁰ Nevertheless their response was fast and unexpected for the Argentines.⁵¹ The British Cabinet, led by Prime Minister (PM) Margaret Thatcher, approved sending a Task Force to recover the islands on 2 April, i.e. Operation Corporate. The next day, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) approved Resolution 502, on UK request, demanding: (i) immediate cessation of hostilities, (ii) immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the islands and (iii) diplomatic solution and respect for the UN Charter.⁵² The following day British troops began utilizing US facilities in Ascension, a British mid-Atlantic island.⁵³ On 9 April, the European Economic Community (EEC) imposed economic sanctions on Argentina. Three days later, Britain declared and enforced a Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ) of 200 miles around the Falklands / Malvinas Islands – which later became a Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) on 30 April. From 21 to 25 April UK forces successfully executed Operation Paraquet: the recapture of South Georgia.

Britain benefited from US support, which initially was not guaranteed. From 8 to 29 April, US Secretary of State Alexander Haig mediated unsuccessfully between the UK and Argentina, both US allies. On 30 April, US President Ronald Reagan finally declared his country's support for Britain in terms of *matériel* and by imposing economic sanctions on Argentina.

Thereafter, from 1 to 20 May, both sides engaged in a predominantly air-sea conflict. On 1 May the UK initiated air raids and naval bombardments of Stanley / Puerto Argentino. The next day, the Argentine cruiser, *General Belgrano*, was sunk by *Conqueror*, a British nuclear submarine. Soon after, Admiral Juan Anaya, Commander-in-Chief of the Argentine Navy, ordered his surface fleet to withdraw to shallow waters

⁵⁰ Parkinson in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 18.

⁵¹ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 501.

⁵² United Nations (1982).

⁵³ Hime (2010), p. 59.

near the continent.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the FAA, led by Air Chief Marshal Basilio Lami Dozo, and the CANA damaged and sunk a series of British ships.⁵⁵

Major land operations began on 21 May. On that day, the British successfully executed Operation Sutton: the landing of the Royal Marines (RM) 3 Commando Brigade in San Carlos bay, under heavy Argentine aerial attack.⁵⁶ As the beachhead was consolidated, a UK detachment captured the twin settlements of Goose Green and Darwin on 28 May. British troops then made their way to Stanley / Puerto Argentino (the capital) facing scarce resistance on land. On 1 June, the British Army's 5th Infantry Brigade arrived in San Carlos and also proceeded to the islands' capital. However, one of its units, the Welsh Guard, suffered heavy losses from an Argentine aerial bombardment on 8 June at Bluff Cove / Bahía Agradable where they had been embarked on *Sir Galahad*, accompanied by *Sir Tristram*, both landing ships logistics. From 11 June, the British fought for the surrounding heights of Stanley / Puerto Argentino and intensified the bombardment of the city itself from sea, air and land. On 14 June Argentina surrendered all forces in the islands.

⁵⁴ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 774.

⁵⁵ Freedman (2005), Location 17,028.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Location 16,812.

I. Case Study of Britain

KNOWLEDGE GAP

Many, if not all, UK War Cabinet ministers demonstrated, initially, a significant dearth of knowledge regarding the Falklands / Malvinas. For example, former Secretary of Defence John Nott later admitted: 'I didn't even know, frankly, where the Falkland Islands were!'.⁵⁷ Only Cecil Parkinson, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, had made regular visits to Latin America, including Argentina.⁵⁸ The islands were simply not a priority. The Government's focus was elsewhere: the Warsaw pact, the Iran-Iraq War and Belize.⁵⁹

This human capital deficit led to the erroneous strategic assessment that all was fine with the islands, despite indications to the contrary. Indeed, Thatcher and members of her Cabinet confirmed that they and their peers were not aware of any real threat of conflict until Operation Rosario was actually underway.⁶⁰ However, on 2 March 1982, Nicanor Costa Méndez, the Argentine Foreign Minister (or Chancellor), had issued a threat: if an early solution to diplomatic negotiations was not forthcoming, Argentina would choose the procedure which best suited its interests.⁶¹ The message was later retracted to avoid publicizing Operation Rosario.⁶² According to Galtieri, Costa Méndez's message meant that Argentina could follow a diplomatic or a military path.⁶³ Furthermore, the Argentines had already occupied the island of Thule (one of

⁵⁷ Nott in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 18.

⁵⁸ Freedman (2005), Location 1,205.

⁵⁹ Armitage in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 23.

⁶⁰ Thatcher in Dale (2012), Location 184; Nott and Parkinson in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 18.

⁶¹ Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 32; Hore (2005), p. 214.

⁶² Hore (2005), p. 214.

⁶³ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 692.

the South Sandwich Islands) in the late 1970s and sent military personnel to practice aircraft landings and gather intelligence in the Falklands / Malvinas.⁶⁴

These signs of pressure from Argentina were clear to the Kelpers. British Major Ewen Southby-Tailyour, who often visited the islands, reported that among the local populace ‘the subject of imminent Argentine invasion was the topic of conversation... every single day; not “If” but “When” and “How”’.⁶⁵ For example, Neil Watson, a Kelper, affirmed: ‘I was absolutely certain there would be an invasion, and so were a lot of other people, including the governor, Rex Hunt, and the captain of HMS *Endurance* Nick Barker.... The warnings were there for all to see, but were ignored by the British Government’.⁶⁶

A number of civil servants in Whitehall, London, had also picked up the signs. They warned ministers that it was necessary to either reinforce or negotiate, but ignorance and disinterest over the islands was so elevated that political leaders declined both options.⁶⁷

After the war an official UK report (Franks Report) concluded that the ‘invasion of the Falkland Islands on 2 April could not have been foreseen’.⁶⁸ The facts presented above clearly indicate otherwise.

As a result of poor strategic assessment, British military effectiveness suffered in terms of equipment and responsiveness. Political leaders in London authorized the deployment to the islands of only two small RM detachment of less than 100 men and, for a limited time, the ice patrol ship *Endurance*.⁶⁹ To save funds, the runway in Stanley / Puerto Argentino was not extended (as it was after the war) to accommodate heavy transport aircraft and combat jets, which could fly in on short notice to reinforce ground troops.⁷⁰ According to Roger Jackling, an MoD senior civil servant, contingency

⁶⁴ Southby-Tailyour and Fowler in McManners (2008), p.13.

⁶⁵ Southby-Tailyour in McManners (2008), p.12.

⁶⁶ Watson in McManners (2008), p. 12.

⁶⁷ Henderson in Dorman *et al.* (2005), pp. 19-20, 25.

⁶⁸ Franks *et al.* (1983), Paragraph 266.

⁶⁹ Taylor (2010), p. 8; Tripodi (2003), p. 110.

⁷⁰ Beetham in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 24.

plans for reinforcing the islands were only relevant ‘if there were airfields to which you could fly with the reinforcements required’.⁷¹

British defensive military capability in and around the islands was, consequently, not at its best in early April. When Argentine Forces attacked on that month, 2,000-4,000 hostile troops overpowered the 84 British marines stationed in the islands.⁷² Argentina noted three dead and five wounded on its side; no British casualties were reported.⁷³ Operation Rosario was intended to be bloodless to facilitate negotiations.⁷⁴ The British forces in the islands, however, were clearly neutralized and defeated. So much so that UK Foreign Secretary Peter Carrington resigned on 5 April, expressing that ‘the invasion of the Falkland Islands has been a humiliating affront to this country’.⁷⁵

DECISIVENESS

During the course of the conflict, Thatcher exercised a particular skill which is especially difficult in war: she was decisive in a Clausewitzian sense, i.e. she stuck to her opinion and refused to change unless forced to do so by a clear conviction.⁷⁶ Admiral Henry Leach, First Sea Lord during the war, recalled the following impression of Thatcher: ‘faced with a crisis we had a Prime Minister of courage, decision and action to meet it’.⁷⁷ In a telegram to Reagan, Haig expressed that Thatcher ‘has the bit in her teeth.... [and] is rigid in her insistence on a return to the *status quo ante*’.⁷⁸ Costa Méndez described Thatcher’s reaction to Operation Rosario as ‘more decisive and violent than what Great Britain had observed up until that moment in similar

⁷¹ Jackling in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 23.

⁷² Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 34.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁷⁴ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 688.

⁷⁵ Carrington (1982).

⁷⁶ Clausewitz (1984), p. 108.

⁷⁷ Leach (2005), p. 70.

⁷⁸ Haig (1982a).

situations'.⁷⁹ So much determination on the part of the PM was not easy. As Clausewitz noted: 'With its mass of vivid impressions and the doubts which characterize all information and opinion, there is no activity like war to rob men of confidence in themselves and in others, and to divert them from their original course of action'.⁸⁰

Thatcher's firmness of mind, strengthened British strategic command and control. This is exemplified by her relatively fast decision (with War Cabinet approval) to allow *Conqueror* to torpedo the *Belgrano* on 2 May, the first major loss of the conflict for either side.⁸¹ Nott called it 'the easiest decision of the war'.⁸² But the facts indicate otherwise. First, the decision would (and did) greatly escalate the conflict, e.g. the Type 42 destroyer *Sheffield* was sunk two days later, the first RN ship lost in action since WWII.⁸³ Second, it would (and did) make peace negotiations more difficult. Galtieri, in fact, rejected the Peruvian peace plan, on 3 May, citing the *Belgrano* incident.⁸⁴ Third, the *Belgrano* was sighted outside the TEZ.⁸⁵ Fourth, the decision was controversial among the political elite. As Nott himself indicated, the majority of Thatcher's non-War Cabinet ministers, and much of the Conservative and Labour parties in Parliament preferred a diplomatic solution.⁸⁶ This view was shared by Foreign Secretary Francis Pym, who openly defied the PM.⁸⁷ A faltering, less self-confident, head of government could therefore have easily delayed or avoided the decision altogether.

Thatcher's contribution to strategic command and control enhanced British military effectiveness in terms of responsiveness. In the *Belgrano* incident, *Conqueror* was allowed to fire before losing target. If the opportunity had been missed, less reliable means may have been used to attack the same ship at a later moment. For

⁷⁹ Méndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 685.

⁸⁰ Clausewitz (1984), p.107.

⁸¹ Thatcher (2013) p. 368.

⁸² Nott in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 62.

⁸³ Barrow in McManners (2008), p. 169.

⁸⁴ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Appendix A.

⁸⁵ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Location 3,319

⁸⁶ Nott in Dorman *et al.* (2005), pp. 32, 60.

⁸⁷ Haig (1982a); Thatcher in Dale (2012), Location 210.

example, Captain Michael Barrow of *Glamorgan* remarked: 'If *Belgrano* hadn't sunk, I think my fellow frigate captains and I would have been the next people to be sent to sink her with our Exocets.... [however] I had never actually fired an Exocet missile'.⁸⁸

The effective use of *Conquerer* occasioned substantial offensive and defensive military power for Britain. The enemy experienced the loss of a cruiser, containing approximately 1,000 men (300-400 were killed or went missing).⁸⁹ Furthermore, the engagement eliminated a clear and present threat. Captain Carlos Madero, a Weapons Officer in the *Belgrano*, acknowledged that his ship's group had been 'ordered to move from the south in a pincer movement [together with a carrier group], to be ready to attack [the British Task Force]'.⁹⁰ Madero also affirmed that this engagement was eventually cancelled (just before the *Belgrano* sunk) due to climatic conditions.⁹¹ However, it is apparent from his statement that, had the *Belgrano* survived, similar offensive maneuvers could have been undertaken against the British Fleet on short notice. More importantly, the sinking of the *Belgrano*, and the subsequent attack on the dispatch boat *Sobral*, contributed vitally to Anaya's decision of withdrawing the Argentine surface fleet to shallow waters,⁹² thereby leaving Britain with near complete command of the sea.⁹³

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Britain's War Cabinet ministers were assisted by permanent, professional and generally well educated civil servants, particularly from the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office. One such civil servant was MoD Permanent Secretary Frank Cooper, who had a surplus of experience and knowledge about crisis management. As a long serving civil servant, he had had direct personal experience of

⁸⁸ Barrow in McManners (2008), p. 157.

⁸⁹ Goldblat and Millán (1983), pp. 18, 40.

⁹⁰ Madero in McManners (2008), pp. 148-149.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), pp. 774-775.

⁹³ Parada in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 433.

all War Cabinets since 1945.⁹⁴ When asked by Thatcher, in a confidential session on 4 April, ‘how do you actually run a war?’ he had good advice to impart: (i) set up a small War Cabinet; (ii) make sure there are regular meetings; (iii) keep the chain of command as simple as possible; and (iv) do not delay or avoid decisions.⁹⁵ The last point was clearly taken up by Thatcher with enthusiasm, as previously noted. Cooper’s three other points were also adopted. The War Cabinet was kept small with only six regular political members, accompanied by the necessary permanent officials, including the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) Admiral of the Fleet Terence Lewin (Britain’s top military advisor) and the Cabinet Secretary Robert Armstrong (the UK’s top civil servant).⁹⁶ The War Cabinet also met regularly, at least once a day (sometimes twice) during the entire war.⁹⁷ All serious and detailed operational decisions were reserved for these meetings.⁹⁸ Additionally, Thatcher met with the full Cabinet every week to keep it abreast of events in the war,⁹⁹ and to obtain support for broad decisions in the conflict.¹⁰⁰ As for the chain of command, it passed from the Prime Minister directly to the CDS and on to the Task Force Commander.¹⁰¹

Cooper’s knowledgeable counsel (and its implementation) strengthened Britain’s strategic command and control. Since the War Cabinet was small, decisions based on consensus or wide support could be made more easily and within a relatively short time span. Indeed, all members, with the exception of Pym, were usually like-minded.¹⁰² When the full Cabinet had to be consulted, the Prime Minister could rely on a majority of supportive and well-informed War Cabinet ministers to convince their less informed peers in favor of fast and favorable decisions. Since the War Cabinet met regularly, decisions were not delayed by the long or irregular absences of political

⁹⁴ Hennessy (2005), pp. 135-136.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹⁶ Freedman (2005), Locations 1,188-1,196, 1,242-1,250, 1,323.

⁹⁷ Hennessy (2005), p. 138.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁰ Parkinson in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 31; Hennessy (2005), p. 140.

¹⁰¹ Freedman (2005), Location 1,283.

¹⁰² Nott in Dorman *et al.* (2005) p. 71.

leaders. And since the chain of command was short and simple, decisions could be transmitted with celerity and few (if any) distortions or errors.

The celerity in the production and communication of political decisions improved British military effectiveness in terms of responsiveness. For example, the Task Force was able to deploy on 5 April, with full Cabinet support, only three days after the Argentine occupation of the islands.¹⁰³ The decision to sink the *Belgrano*, by the War Cabinet, was made and executed on the same day (2 May), as noted. The War Cabinet's decision to allow troops to land in San Carlos (under heavy aerial bombardment) was made, with full Cabinet support, in only two days (18-19 May) and executed just two days later (21 May).¹⁰⁴ Even General Mario Menéndez, the Argentine Malvinas Military Governor, expressed admiration for the speed of the British.¹⁰⁵

As a result of rapid resource management, the offensive military capability of UK land forces was maintained at an adequate level as military action during the harsh South Atlantic winter (June – August) was mostly avoided. The issue of the upcoming winter was in fact one of the top preoccupations of senior officials.¹⁰⁶ So much so that, according to one senior RN officer, a one or two months delay in the San Carlos landing could have made British leaders 'reconsider the whole business'.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, by the end of the Falklands Campaign, British soldiers in the islands were already suffering from the adverse climate. For example, Chaplain David Cooper recalled: 'we lay down in a scrape in the ground and simply froze. It was the coldest I've ever known. Then the cloud base dropped and it snowed'.¹⁰⁸ Lieutenant Colonel David Chaundler remarked: 'it was bitterly, bitterly cold.... Men were doing PT, running up hills and even double sentry duty to keep warm'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Appendix A; Hennessy (2005), p. 140.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 501.

¹⁰⁶ Bramall in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 54; Band (2005), p. 33

¹⁰⁷ Whetstone in McManners (2008), p. 47.

¹⁰⁸ Cooper in McManners (2008), p. 388.

¹⁰⁹ Chaundler in McManners (2008), p. 394.

DIPLOMACY AT ITS BEST

As Argentina occupied the Falklands / Malvinas, Britain was able to rely on two skilled and experienced diplomats: Anthony Parsons, Permanent Representative to the UN, and John Nicholas Henderson, Ambassador to the US. Parsons had over four years experience in the UN.¹¹⁰ He was also popular in that institution and persuasive.¹¹¹ Henderson had been Ambassador to the US since 1979 and, as a former President of the Oxford Union (a debating society), was also persuasive.¹¹²

The human capital surplus represented by Parsons and Henderson translated into rapid and effective diplomacy in the UN and US, respectively. Parsons convinced the UN Security Council to pass Resolution 502, drafted by his delegation. This was done under unfavorable odds. Parsons had to convince several non-aligned countries in the UNSC to deny a non-aligned country of a colonial territory.¹¹³ However, prior to and during UNSC debates, Parsons personally consulted and convinced delegates to support his draft.¹¹⁴ The argument he formulated was widely appealing: Argentina had violated the UN Charter on the non-use of force to settle disputes and this set a dangerous precedent.¹¹⁵ The approval of the resolution, in effect, branded Argentina's seizure of the islands as null and void while that country's subsequent non-compliance with the resolution enhanced the legitimacy of UK military action,¹¹⁶ thereby facilitating foreign aid to Britain.

Henderson's lobby in Washington eventually secured full US support for the UK in the war. This was also a challenging affair. Jeane Kirkpatrick, US Ambassador to the UN, was staunchly in favor of Argentina and Haig initially attempted even handed

¹¹⁰ Toase (2005), p. 160 and Balfour-Paul (2004).

¹¹¹ Toase (2005), p. 160.

¹¹² Ure (2013).

¹¹³ Toase (2005), pp. 158-159.

¹¹⁴ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Location 2,354.

¹¹⁵ Toase (2005), p. 161.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

mediation between the warring factions.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, Henderson excelled in his role. He met personally with senior US officials and appeared on US television more than sixty times to make a forceful argument: the UK was fighting an aggressive act by a totalitarian state in the interest of the self-determination of the Falkland islanders.¹¹⁸ After the war, Parsons' and Henderson's work earned wide admiration, even from the Argentine Government.¹¹⁹

As a result of effective diplomacy in New York and Washington, Britain's military effectiveness improved in terms of equipment. According to Leach, the US supplied AIM-9L Sidewinder air-to-air missiles which were then only starting production in the UK.¹²⁰ Air Marshal John Curtis, the UK's Air Component Commander during the war, recalled that some special anti-radar missiles were also supplied and that the US not only allowed Britain full use of its facilities in the British island of Ascension (thereby fulfilling treaty obligations), but also supplied fuel and water from American tankers sitting offshore.¹²¹

Moreover, UK diplomacy improved the country's military effectiveness in terms of skill. According to Nott, the French lent Super Etendard and Mirage aircrafts (used by the Argentines) for British pilots to practice against.¹²²

British diplomacy also ensured US intelligence aid, which somewhat enhanced the nation's military effectiveness in terms of responsiveness. According to Commander Robert Green, Intelligence Staff Officer to Admiral John Fieldhouse (Task Force Commander) the UK depended on US intelligence, since it had virtually no intelligence sources on the ground in Argentina, considering that the latter had been an ally.¹²³

The foreign aid which the UK received positively contributed to its offensive military capability. Air power, in particular, flourished. For example, Horacio Gonzalez,

¹¹⁷ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Location 2,440.

¹¹⁸ Ure (2013).

¹¹⁹ Nott and Parkinson in Dorman *et al.* (2005), pp. 35-36 and Argentine Government (1983a), pp. 69-70.

¹²⁰ Leach (2005), p. 74.

¹²¹ Hore (2005), p. 219; Curtiss in McManners (2008), p. 54.

¹²² Nott in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 65.

¹²³ Green in McManners (2008), p. 57.

an FAA Captain during the war, recalled: ‘More than 90 per cent of all our aircraft losses were caused by [British] Harriers firing the American made AIM-9L Sidewinder air-to-air missile’.¹²⁴ The entire British offensive, extended over 12,000 km from the UK, was made viable, in logistics terms, by the Ascension base. Only US intelligence, from satellites, proved to be of limited reliability.¹²⁵

PROPER OBJECTIVES

On the eve of war, Lewin possessed the military and political acumen, which Clausewitz considered essential for a commander-in-chief.¹²⁶ The CDS had first hand experience of conflict, having served on several dangerous RN convoy missions during WWII.¹²⁷ Lewin had also accrued valuable political knowledge from deeply studying the mistakes of the Suez debacle of 1956.¹²⁸

The CDS’s human capital surplus contributed to better strategic assessment within the British Government. In his first meeting with Thatcher’s War Cabinet, Lewin requested from his political masters a precise goal for the war. Not receiving an answer, he proposed two objectives (one political and one military), which he had written down prior to the meeting, after discussing with his staff:

[Political Objective.] The overall aim of Her Majesty’s Government is to bring about the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands and dependencies, and the re-establishment of British administration there, as quickly as possible. [Military Objective.]

¹²⁴ Gonzalez (2005), p. 80.

¹²⁵ Green in McManners (2008), p. 57.

¹²⁶ Clausewitz (1984), p. 111.

¹²⁷ Hill (2004).

¹²⁸ Freedman (2005), Location 4,823.

Military deployments and operations are directed to the support of this aim.¹²⁹

All ministers promptly agreed.¹³⁰

The establishment of these objectives bolstered British military effectiveness in at least two ways. First, they contributed to responsiveness by adding the concept of celerity to the overall aim. Previous discussion has evidenced that speed was an attribute of the UK Government in the war. Second, the objectives made real integration between the three military services possible by providing all with a clear and common purpose. Joint action by British forces in the war was in fact quite effective at times, despite some setbacks.¹³¹ A prime example is the joint bombardment of Stanley / Puerto Argentino, especially during the end of the British Campaign. One Argentine soldier in the city at the time, recalled: 'They [the British] attacked us from all sides, from land and from four frigates.... It was unbearable.... We spent four hours, inhaling earth, head down'.¹³² Other Argentine soldiers made similar reports.¹³³ Absent Lewin's objectives, this may not have occurred. For instance, Argentine commanders expected the British ground forces to make a strong hold in San Carlos and attempt negotiations from there.¹³⁴

As a result of both higher speed and better integration, UK offensive military power was higher than it might have been. As noted previously, speed allowed UK forces to avoid deterioration by winter weather. Regarding the UK's joint efforts, the effective bombardment of Port Stanley from land, sea and air was indicated by Menéndez as a crucial element in his decision to surrender.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Locations 4,823-4,833.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Location 4,833.

¹³¹ Fox in McManners (2008), p. 259.

¹³² Guillermo in Kon (1983), p. 32.

¹³³ Jorge and Juan Carlos in Kon (1983), p. 97, 125; Ojeda in McManners (2008), p. 418.

¹³⁴ Castellano in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 411.

¹³⁵ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), pp. 497, 515.

LONG RANGE LOGISTICS

The RN in the 1980s possessed personnel with years of experience and accumulated knowledge regarding extended naval operations and logistics. In the 1970s for example, Lewin (then Vice-Chief of Naval Staff) sponsored and carried through the idea of ‘group deployments’ for ships of the fleet to go to distant parts of the planet, sometimes around it, for several months, thus maintaining ‘operational autonomy, command expertise, and confidence’.¹³⁶ The Royal Air Force (RAF) had also spent the 1960s and 1970s practicing and studying exceedingly long range flights.¹³⁷

During the Falklands / Malvinas War this collective body of experience and knowledge within the RN and RAF ensured smooth logistics, despite great difficulties. To illustrate, after only three hours of sailing, *Invincible* experienced problems with a gearbox, which disabled one of the ships’ two propellers.¹³⁸ John Jeremy Black, Captain of *Invincible*, promptly ordered a new gearbox to be flown in.¹³⁹ The three tons piece was delivered by Chinook from Britain, despite heavy fog, and successfully refitted while the ship continued sailing.¹⁴⁰ Another example is the management of supply lines via Ascension by the RN and RAF.¹⁴¹ Prior to the war, the island was actually devoid of resources, possessing only a small US Air Force base with just one uniformed member and a runway that registered regular activity of 2-3 aircrafts per fortnight.¹⁴² Nott even remarked: ‘My own initial reaction was that this was just not a viable logistic operation’.¹⁴³ However, the organizational skills of the RN and RAF were sufficient to turn Ascension into the bustling logistics node capable of sustaining a Task Force

¹³⁶ Hill (2004).

¹³⁷ Baird (1983), pp. 933-935

¹³⁸ Hastings (2012), Locations 3,567-3,577; Black in McManners (2008), p. 50.

¹³⁹ Black in McManners (2008), p. 50.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Hore (2005), p. 220; Thompson (2005), p. 95.

¹⁴² Hore (2005), pp. 215-219.

¹⁴³ Nott (2005), p. 63

extended over 12,000 km from the UK.¹⁴⁴ Even Argentine prisoners of war (POWs) marvelled at Britain's capacity for organization.¹⁴⁵

Proper logistics, in turn, ensured military effectiveness in the form of responsiveness and adequate equipment. In the case of *Invincible*, the gearbox refit was achieved in record time (10 days) while steaming.¹⁴⁶ If the ship had returned to Portsmouth for repair, it may have had to spend up to three weeks in the dockyard, while wasting precious sailing time.¹⁴⁷ Hence, a flag ship of the Task Force – initially loaded with eight Sea Harriers, five Sea King helicopters, two Sea Dart SAM launchers and 1,000 crew members – avoided nearly a month of absence in a war that lasted little over two months.¹⁴⁸ Regarding Ascension, even before May, the island had already registered more aircraft movements than Chicago O'Hare International Airport.¹⁴⁹ During the entire conflict, the RAF air bridge from Britain to the island logged 535 sorties transporting over 6,000 tons of supplies, 5,500 passengers, nearly 100 vehicles and over 20 helicopters.¹⁵⁰

The responsiveness and equipment imparted by adequate logistics contributed to British offensive military capability. For example, *Invincible*, which transported nearly half of all Sea Harriers, was responsible for part of the 23 enemy aircraft shot down by the Fleet Air Arm.¹⁵¹ As for Ascension it was, as noted, a *sine qua non* for the British to deploy a significant armed opposition to the enemy.

PROFESSIONALS

All British soldiers and marines that served in the war were volunteers and professionals. They had all passed rigorous selection processes and undertaken career-

¹⁴⁴ Hore (2005), pp. 221-222; Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 35.

¹⁴⁵ Guillermo, Jorge and Fabian E. in Kon (1983), pp. 39, 107, 163.

¹⁴⁶ Black in McManners (2008), p. 50.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Appendix B.

¹⁴⁹ Hore (2005), pp. 221-222.

¹⁵⁰ Thompson (2005), p. 95 and Grove (2005), p. 275.

¹⁵¹ Grove (2005), p. 272.

long quality education and training in civilian and military institutions, including joint training.¹⁵² Their service experience ranged from 3-22 years and, in most cases, included combat experience.¹⁵³ The RM, in particular, regularly trained in Norway, under climatic conditions similar to those in the Falklands / Malvinas.¹⁵⁴ Major General John Jeremy Moore (Land Forces Commander, RM) had several years of experience in mounting an amphibious task force.¹⁵⁵ Brigadier Julian Thompson (3 Commando Brigade Commander, RM) had planned and executed 'countless' amphibious exercises in various ranks as well as having been Chief of Staff of his Commando Brigade.¹⁵⁶

This human capital surplus within the RM and British Army had a direct impact on the UK's offensive military capability on land. Firstly, British soldiers and marines took good care of themselves during harsh weather conditions, despite deficiencies in kit, thereby minimizing their own losses to trench foot. Max Hastings, a journalist and eyewitness, noted that washing, changing clothes, keeping dry and looking after each other was second nature to the British.¹⁵⁷ For example, Sergeant Major Peter Richens, British Army, recalled: 'We wore one pair of socks, and kept a second pair under our armpits drying off during the day, to wear at night. Our army issue boots let the water in very badly'.¹⁵⁸ Captain Adrian Freer, British Army, voiced similar complaint: 'Our DMS boots and puttees were useless... which, with cold and blisters, destroyed people's feet.... Our clothing was bad too'.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless British trench foot cases amounted to only 48,¹⁶⁰ compared to 173 suffered by the Argentines.¹⁶¹

Secondly, British troops worked well with air support. For instance, on 20 May special forces discovered a helicopter park in the islands and called for air strike. Two

¹⁵² Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 9; Stewart (1991), pp. 38-42.

¹⁵³ Record (1982), p. 47; Stewart (1991), p. 40.

¹⁵⁴ Stewart (1991), p. 40.

¹⁵⁵ Moore in McManners (2008), p. 40.

¹⁵⁶ Thompson (2005), pp. 83-84.

¹⁵⁷ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Location 3,896.

¹⁵⁸ Richens in McManners (2008), p. 218.

¹⁵⁹ Freer in McManners (2008), p. 338.

¹⁶⁰ Freedman (2005), Appendices, Casualties.

¹⁶¹ Ceballos in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 976.

Chinooks and two Pumas were destroyed.¹⁶² This eliminated a large proportion of Argentina's limited helicopter reserves.¹⁶³ Menéndez, and his Chief of Staff, Major General Américo Daher, both confirmed later that the Argentine counterattack in San Carlos did not occur by land troops because the British had destroyed most of their transport helicopters.¹⁶⁴

Thirdly, British troops proved exceptional at modern conventional combat, especially in terms of camouflage, taking cover and night fighting. This maximized enemy losses and minimized own casualties. For example, the official British war artist noted: 'There was no great army of people to see as the camouflage was incredible'.¹⁶⁵ In the battle of Darwin / Goose Green, British soldiers' accounts reveal that they advanced effectively, in the absence of natural cover, by overpowering enemy positions, taking cover in the adversary's trenches and pushing forward when hostile fire momentarily ceased.¹⁶⁶ Major General Omar Parada, overall Commander of Argentine forces in Goose Green and Darwin, later acknowledged that the British had achieved 'total superiority'.¹⁶⁷

British superiority in night fighting was most evident in the battle for Stanley / Puerto Argentino. According to Argentine soldiers the British were methodical: they used luminous tracer bullets to mark targets, then opened fire using machine guns and artillery with 'incredible accuracy' and, subsequently, advanced.¹⁶⁸ For one Argentine soldier, the British attacks were unexpected and fast, 'like lightning'.¹⁶⁹ Major General Oscar Jofre, overall Land Commander for Stanley / Puerto Argentino, later considered the British to have the 'second army in the world, after the Russians, in capacity for night combat'.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶² Finlan (2002), p. 89.

¹⁶³ Groove (2005), p. 271.

¹⁶⁴ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 487; Daher in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 376.

¹⁶⁵ Kitson in McManners (2008), p. 311.

¹⁶⁶ Carter and Crosland in McManners (2008), pp. 248-249.

¹⁶⁷ Parada in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 435.

¹⁶⁸ Guillermo and Juan Carlos in Kon (1983), pp. 32, 124.

¹⁶⁹ Fabian E. in Kon (1983), p. 152.

¹⁷⁰ Jofre in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 420.

British land forces won all major engagements, despite numerical inferiority and not too dissimilar equipment. Overall, the British fielded 10,000 men versus 13,000 enemy troops, as noted.¹⁷¹ In the battle of Darwin / Goose Green, the British had only 450-600 men versus 1,000-1,800 Argentines.¹⁷² During the war, British ground forces suffered 125 killed in action and 330 injured, wounded or ill.¹⁷³ By contrast, the Argentine Army registered 195 dead or disappeared and 1,046 injured overall. Additionally, 9,500 Argentines surrendered in Stanley / Puerto Argentino and 1,200 in Goose Green.¹⁷⁴ Regarding armaments, the British had longer range artillery,¹⁷⁵ but lacked the powerful 155 mm Artillery of the adversary.¹⁷⁶ Argentine troops possessed better night-vision equipment, more powerful rifles, and general purpose machine-guns similar to those used by British forces.¹⁷⁷ As one Argentine soldier put it: ‘it wasn’t just the difference in weapons. They [the British] were real professionals, down to the last soldier.... you come to the conclusion that the fight was very unequal’.¹⁷⁸

EMPATHY FOR THE ENEMY

The British land forces were fortunate to have three key men during final surrender negotiations: Moore; Lieutenant Colonel Michael Rose, Special Air Service (SAS) Commanding Officer; and RM Captain Rod Bell. Moore was well versed in military history,¹⁷⁹ Rose was an experienced terrorist negotiator,¹⁸⁰ and Bell was

¹⁷¹ Goldbalt and Millán (1983), p. 9.

¹⁷² Richens in McManners (2008), p. 273; Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 490.

¹⁷³ Freedman (2005), Appendices, Casualties.

¹⁷⁴ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 510; Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Location 5,346.

¹⁷⁵ Robacio in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 988.

¹⁷⁶ Brown in McManners (2008), p. 378.

¹⁷⁷ Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Location 3,887.

¹⁷⁸ Jorge in Kon (1983), p. 101.

¹⁷⁹ Moore in McManners (2008), p. 427.

¹⁸⁰ Thompson in McManners (2008), p. 426

knowledgeable in Spanish and South American culture, having spent all his youth in that region.¹⁸¹

The combined human capital of these men directly impacted British military capability by accomplishing the prompt surrender of all Argentine forces in the Falkland / Malvinas, including those in West Falkland / Gran Malvina which never entered combat.¹⁸² The surrender itself was not guaranteed, Menéndez had originally planned to carry on the resistance for longer, in Stanley / Puerto Argentino airport if necessary.¹⁸³ However, Rose called for negotiations in compelling fashion. Argentine Navy Captain Barry Hussey, recalled:

I wrote down the message [from Rose] which said: “You are surrounded, you have no way out, we don’t want to kill you, you have no options. You’re outgunned and we want to sit down and talk.” It was psychologically very well expressed.¹⁸⁴

Menéndez accepted to meet with Moore, Rose and Bell. Moore, having been briefed by Bell that Argentine soldiers tended to accept surrender if they deemed it honourable, began his meeting with Menéndez by expressing his respect for the bravery of Argentine officers.¹⁸⁵ To avoid humiliating Menéndez, Moore prohibited the negotiations from being filmed, recorded or photographed.¹⁸⁶ He also decided in favor of a discreet victory service in church over a parade.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, from his reading of the troubled Japanese surrender in WWII, Moore decided to cross out the term ‘unconditional’ from the surrender document, as soon as Menéndez raised complaint,

¹⁸¹ Moore in McManners (2008), p. 421.

¹⁸² Argentine Government (1983a), p. 204.

¹⁸³ Hussey in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 900.

¹⁸⁴ Hussey in McManners (2008), p. 421.

¹⁸⁵ Moore in McManners (2008), pp. 427-429

¹⁸⁶ Nicholson in McManners (2008), p. 429.

¹⁸⁷ Cooper in McManners (2008), p. 435.

to avoid prolonging the war.¹⁸⁸ Anaya later confirmed that Menéndez had communicated to Galtieri his wish to capitulate arguing that Moore had offered him an ‘honourable surrender’.¹⁸⁹

CHILEAN CONNECTION

The British were also fortunate to have, during the war, another officer that was well versed in hispanic language and culture: Wing Commander Sidney Edwards. Only two days after the Argentine occupation of the islands, Edwards was sent, secretly, by the RAF to meet with General Fernando Matthei, Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Air Force. Matthei opined that Edwards ‘did not look English at all and spoke Spanish perfectly’.¹⁹⁰

The cooperation between the British and Chilean governments, covertly established and maintained by Edwards during the war, despite Chile’s official neutrality, greatly improved British intelligence. In exchange for British aircrafts and radars, Chile provided the UK Government with timely signals intelligence (from radars near its borders with Argentina) on Argentine communications, especially regarding the takeoff of combat aircraft towards the British Fleet.¹⁹¹ Chile’s radar data was centralized in an underground military base in Punta Arenas where Edwards transmitted relevant information to Northwood Central Command near London via a direct satellite link.¹⁹²

This intelligence work allowed the British Task Force to be more responsive to enemy air raids than was otherwise possible. By the time Argentine combat aircrafts arrived near the British Fleet, early warning had been transmitted from Northwood, ships had readied their missile defences and Harriers were conducting Combat Air

¹⁸⁸ Moore in McManners (2008), pp. 427, 429.

¹⁸⁹ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 782.

¹⁹⁰ Matthei in Clavel (2002).

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

Patrol (CAP).¹⁹³ Notably, the Task Force did not have the alternative of relying on airborne early warning aircraft since these could not operate on the carriers *Hermes* or *Invincible*, which only allowed for short takeoff and vertical landing.¹⁹⁴

This higher military effectiveness clearly translated to military capability. Thatcher later revealed that the bombing of *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* by Argentine aircraft occurred because Chile's long-range radar had switched off for overdue maintenance.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, there had been no CAP during the bombing.¹⁹⁶ 52 Britons were killed.¹⁹⁷ Hence, it may be safely concluded that the intelligence from Chile probably saved the British Fleet from much further destruction.

¹⁹³ Thatcher (1999).

¹⁹⁴ Tripodi (2003), pp. 117-118.

¹⁹⁵ Thatcher (1999).

¹⁹⁶ Edmonds in McManners (2008), p. 324.

¹⁹⁷ Freedman (2005), Appendices, Casualties.

II. Case Study of Argentina

TROUBLED JUNTA

Within the Argentine Military Junta, human capital was lowest among those who exercised most influence. In a secret telegram to Pym, Haig described his firsthand impression of the three Junta members thus: ‘Galtieri is the least bright and given to bluster; the Admiral [Anaya] is ultra hard-line; the Air Force General [Lami Dozo] is bright. Politically reasonable – relatively speaking – but clearly third in influence’.¹⁹⁸ In a conversation with Henderson, Haig described Galtieri as ‘not only an alcoholic but also incapable of rational thought’.¹⁹⁹ In another telegram to Pym, Haig noted Galtieri’s poor leadership: ‘It is not clear who is in charge here, as many as 50 people, including corps commanders, may be exercising vetoes’.²⁰⁰ This evaluation was reiterated by Haig in a closed briefing session in the US Congress.²⁰¹ Galtieri, who partook even in operational matters during the war, also admitted later not having participated in any training exercise involving the defence of an island.²⁰² Furthermore, none of the Junta members (and their subordinates) had undertaken any significant joint training.²⁰³

The Junta’s human capital deficiencies led to several defective activities on its part which, in turn, adversely affected military effectiveness and, consequently, military capability. These chain of events are analysed separately below.

¹⁹⁸ Haig (1982c).

¹⁹⁹ Haig in Henderson (1982).

²⁰⁰ Haig (1982b).

²⁰¹ Haig (1982d), p. 4.

²⁰² Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 725.

²⁰³ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 287.

Misjudged Scenarios

Regarding strategic assessment, and more specifically scenario planning, the Junta, until early April 1982, failed to consider the possibilities of a sizable British military reaction to Operation Rosario and of US partiality towards the UK. This was confirmed by Anaya: 'it was not considered that Great Britain would employ practically 80% of its naval power to recover some islands which never signified any profit, but rather always cost money'.²⁰⁴ Daher also noted: 'in no moment was it considered, as a possible variable, that the English would act with significant force as they did in the Malvinas'.²⁰⁵ Moreover, Galtieri later stated: 'In my opinion, facing a conflict inside the West and in America [the Continent], the United States would maintain a balanced position, trying to avoid significant confrontation with both countries [Argentina and UK]'.²⁰⁶ Anaya also did not think the US would allow Britain to use its facilities in Ascension,²⁰⁷ despite the fact that it was obliged to do so by treaty.²⁰⁸

Inadequate scenario planning corroded responsiveness by substituting effective planned action for error-prone improvisation. According to Anaya, there was no contingency plan for the reaction of Britain.²⁰⁹ Indeed, as soon as the islands had been occupied, the Argentine marines withdrew to the continent.²¹⁰ According to Hussey: 'Things were not planned.... Everything indicated a tremendous improvisation'.²¹¹ By contrast, Fieldhouse and his staff had finished preparing a contingency plan for dealing with Argentine hostility by March 1982.²¹²

Improper scenario planning also diminished skill within the Armed Forces, since troops were not psychologically prepared for combat. Lami Dozo later commented: 'I

²⁰⁴ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 744.

²⁰⁵ Daher in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 369.

²⁰⁶ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 695.

²⁰⁷ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 799.

²⁰⁸ Hore (2005), p. 219.

²⁰⁹ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 745.

²¹⁰ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 481.

²¹¹ Hussey in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 908.

²¹² Green in McManners (2008), pp. 15-16.

had the impression that they [Menéndez and staff] had not internalized... the probability of an armed confrontation... although they did everything for the defence [of the islands], they were not morally prepared to execute it'.²¹³ Both senior and low ranking Argentine military personnel, in fact, confirmed that they had not been mentally prepared for war.²¹⁴

Improvisation and morale issues among troops took their toll on military capability. For example, Hussey observed that improvisation contributed to troops not being adequately supplied with bread.²¹⁵ This is significant because many Argentine soldiers were incapacitated by hunger and malnutrition, as examined in detail below. Regarding the morale issue, it seems to have contributed to the early surrender. For example, Daher confirms that Menéndez went to the islands with the mentality of a governor, not of a military commander.²¹⁶ Menéndez himself confirms that Galtieri instructed him early on to 'think as a governor and nothing more'.²¹⁷

Improper Objectives

With regard to strategic assessment, the Junta adopted unclear and incoherent objectives. These were stated in a National Strategic Directive document thus:

Political Objective. Consolidate the sovereignty of Argentina in the Malvinas, Georgias and South Sandwich Islands.... Strategic Military Objective. Impose on Great Britain the acceptance of a *de facto* military situation which will produce a definite solution to the full exercise of

²¹³ Dozo in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 829.

²¹⁴ Daher and Castellanos in Argentine Government (1983c), pp. 369, 379-380, 400; Guillermo, Ariel and Santiago in Kon (1983), pp. 16, 46, 71.

²¹⁵ Hussey in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 908.

²¹⁶ Daher in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 380.

²¹⁷ Menéndez in McManners (2008), p. 20.

Argentine sovereignty in the Malvinas, Georgias and South Sandwich Islands.²¹⁸

Since the above political objective refers to consolidating sovereignty, one may interpret it to mean that Argentine forces should occupy and maintain the islands indefinitely. However, the military objective seems to direct Argentine forces to occupy the islands to impose negotiations on Britain, which could have resulted in a settlement involving the withdrawal of some or all Argentine forces and the establishment of a shared or third party administration of the islands. Asked after the war about these seemingly incompatible objectives, Anaya conceded: 'Apparently there is incoherence'.²¹⁹

The incoherence was accentuated further by Galtieri. After the war, the President recalled that Operation Rosario was originally meant to impose negotiations on the British.²²⁰ However, on 10 May Galtieri publicly announced: 'the dignity and the honour of the nation are non-negotiable'.²²¹ The President later admitted that his speech had been 'improvised'.²²² It also seems irrational since Galtieri himself later conceded that the islands 'could be defended for a certain time, not forever'.²²³ By contrast, Lami Dozo and Anaya continuously supported a limited objective of maximizing enemy losses to impose a negotiated settlement, since they both believed that Argentina could not win militarily.²²⁴

The improper objectives adopted by the Junta harmed integration between the forces. The Army pursued Galtieri's objective of maintaining the islands. Jofre explained that the land force's main objective was 'to defend Puerto Argentino'.²²⁵ By contrast, the FAA and CANA followed Lami Dozo's and Anaya's objective of raising

²¹⁸ Argentine Government (1983g), pp. 301, 305.

²¹⁹ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 744.

²²⁰ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 690.

²²¹ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 72.

²²² Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 697.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 693.

²²⁴ Anaya and Dozo in Argentine Government (1983e), pp. 778, 807, 856.

²²⁵ Jofre in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 426.

enemy losses, as evidenced by their success in damaging British ships (seven fatally, 17 less so).²²⁶

These disjointed actions harmed military power. Land forces placed a premium on static defence and therefore failed to supplement successful aerial attacks on British ground troops. For example, Air Vice Marshal Luis Castellano, Air Component Commander in the Falklands / Malvinas, estimated that if there had been a reaction by land in Bluff Cove a British battalion could have been destroyed.²²⁷ Castellano also noted that if Argentine land forces had destroy the antiaircraft artillery that was later installed by the British, four Argentine aircraft may not have been shot down in the third air raid on that area.²²⁸ According to Captain Carlos Robacio, Commander of the elite 5th Marines Battalion stationed near Stanley / Puerto Argentino, his unit was able and willing to attack in Bluff Cove, but did not receive authorization to do so.²²⁹

Bad Timing

Regarding strategic assessment, and more specifically the timing of the decision to initiate Operation Rosario, the Junta did not manage events, but rather allowed itself to be carried by them. All three Junta members admitted to being precipitated into war by the Davidoff incident,²³⁰ despite the fact that the original idea was for employment not before 9 July 1982.²³¹

Military efficiency was greatly affected by this timing decision. In terms of equipment, the FAA failed to receive the following equipment which had been scheduled for delivery from the second semester of 1982: 12-14 Dagger aircraft, several refuelling aircraft, an integrated system for navigation and targeting; bombs; and

²²⁶ Freedman (2005), Appendices, Equipment Losses.

²²⁷ Castellano in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 410.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Robacio in Argentine Government (1983f), pp. 993-994.

²³⁰ Galtieri, Anaya and Dozo in Argentine Government (1983e), pp. 691, 743, 817.

²³¹ Lombardo in Argentine Government (1983b), p. 71.

radars.²³² The Navy did not receive several Super Etendard jets and Exocet missiles from France because this *matériel* suffered embargo just before embarkation to Argentina.²³³

Moreover, the Junta's timing fundamentally benefited the enemy's capacity to equip itself and respond promptly. Immediately prior to the war, the UK Government was in the process of selling *Invincible* to Australia and *Hermes* to India, and of making corresponding RN manpower reductions, however these measures had not been fully implemented.²³⁴

In terms of skill, the Argentine military did not receive fully trained conscripts by the beginning of the conflict, since it had not yet concluded the 12 month training period of conscripts born in 1962 (class of 62) and had just incorporated conscripts born in 1963 (class of 63).²³⁵ The latter had not finished basic combat training.²³⁶ The two classes made up the conscript force sent to war,²³⁷ with class of 63 representing 20-25% of total.²³⁸

These occurrences harmed Argentine military capability. The absence of key equipment for air operations, meant that fewer British ships and other assets were destroyed. For example, the CANA had only 5 air-sea exocets.²³⁹ Two were used to successfully sink *Sheffield* causing 20 deaths; two more sunk the container ship *Atlantic Conveyor* causing 12 fatalities plus the loss of tentage for four thousand men, three Chinooks and nine Wessex helicopters; and one was used against *Invincible*, but seems to have failed narrowly to reach target.²⁴⁰ Hence, if Argentina had received another load of air-sea exocets it is likely that other major British ships would have been sunk, perhaps even a carrier. If the Argentines had waited a while longer, the

²³² Dozo in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 810.

²³³ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 239.

²³⁴ Whetstone in McManners (2008), p.14.

²³⁵ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 239; Middlebrook (1989), p. 49; Stewart (1991), p. 45.

²³⁶ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 187.

²³⁷ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 704.

²³⁸ Vaquero in Argentine Government (1983b), p. 194.

²³⁹ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 772.

²⁴⁰ Madero and Guttridge in McManners (2008); pp. 186, 302; Freedman (2005), Appendices, Equipment Losses; Hastings and Jenkins (2012), Location 12,138.

British would not even have had carriers to deploy. As for the implications of the general low skill level of the Argentine Army, these are discussed in full below.

Crisis Mismanagement

Regarding strategic command and control, the Junta, during the war, met irregularly; established an unclear and complicated chain of command; and interfered directly in operational matters bypassing (and not informing) senior commanders. Galtieri confirmed that the establishment of a war cabinet with regular meetings 'was not analysed'.²⁴¹ Menéndez recalled: 'one of the problems that we had for many things, was the chain of command which was very complex'.²⁴² Daher thought similarly: 'The chain of command was, really, a hieroglyphic which terrified us from the first day.... there seemed to be a great misunderstanding between what the Centre for Joint Operations could say... and the orders that did not go through the Centre for Joint Operations'.²⁴³ Galtieri also admitted that, after visiting the islands, he ordered, on 22 April, the transfer of the entire 3rd Brigade from the continent to the Falklands / Malvinas,²⁴⁴ despite Menéndez having requested only one regiment from that brigade and without consulting relevant commanders and staff members.²⁴⁵ Galtieri similarly ordered two regiments from 3rd Brigade to be transferred to West Falklands / Gran Malvina.²⁴⁶ By contrast, Thompson noted that, in the British case, 'political interference with operational and tactical matters was notable by its absence'.²⁴⁷

This generalized mismanagement harmed Argentina's military effectiveness in terms of integration. Since the Junta did not meet regularly and the chain of command

²⁴¹ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 730.

²⁴² Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 511.

²⁴³ Daher in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 382.

²⁴⁴ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 700.

²⁴⁵ Argentine Government (1983a), pp. 187-188.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Thompson (2005), p. 98.

was abstruse, each Commander-in-Chief acted unilaterally.²⁴⁸ Equipment and skill also suffered. For example, the transfer of 3rd Brigade, ordered by Galtieri, was undertaken with difficulty since it was originally distributed all over the continent and had to be moved in late April, when the MEZ was already in force.²⁴⁹ As a result, Menéndez explained, the Brigade was transferred ‘almost with nothing. Hence, [within the islands] munitions dropped to half, [and] food dropped to half’.²⁵⁰ Daher voiced similar concern.²⁵¹ Private Jose Ojeda, from 3rd Brigade later recalled: ‘we didn’t know what a passable meal was’.²⁵²

The effects of disjointed action on Argentine military capability have already been discussed. Regarding 3rd Brigade, Galtieri fielded troops that were mostly incapacitated for lack of provisions and which drained 10th Brigade’s supplies thereby making the latter less capable also.²⁵³ The segment of 3rd Brigade in West Falkland / Gran Malvina did not participate in combat at all due to misallocation.²⁵⁴

Chilean Threat

Concerning diplomacy, Galtieri adopted the irrational course of threatening Chile militarily on the day Argentina occupied the Falklands / Malvinas. Galtieri publicly declared that the occupation of the islands was ‘the first step to recovering Argentina’ s territory’ .²⁵⁵ Since Argentina and Chile had nearly engaged in war over the Beagle Channel Islands in 1978, Chilean officials could only interpret this to mean that, if Argentina prevailed over Britain, it would then attempt to prevail over their country.²⁵⁶ For example, Matthei stated: ‘We were not in favor of the Argentines

²⁴⁸ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 165.

²⁴⁹ Parada and Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), pp. 433, 485.

²⁵⁰ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 486.

²⁵¹ Daher in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 372.

²⁵² Ojeda in McManners (2008), p. 342.

²⁵³ Parada in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 431.

²⁵⁴ Castellano in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 402.

²⁵⁵ Galtieri in Tripodi (2003), p. 113.

²⁵⁶ Tripodi (2003), pp. 112-113.

beating the English, because then – and Galtieri had already said so – we would be next'.²⁵⁷ Asked, after the war, if Argentina could have sustained a two-front conflict, Galtieri conceded: 'We could sustain it; but without success'.²⁵⁸

Galtieri's diplomatic irrationality curtailed his nation's military effectiveness in terms of skill and equipment. Chile predictably transferred a large contingent of troops to its southern border with Argentina.²⁵⁹ In response, the Argentine Army maintained its mountain troops – i.e. its the best skilled and equipped troops for cold weather, mountain warfare – in the border with Chile, instead of sending them to the Falklands / Malvinas.²⁶⁰ Moreover, on request by the British Government, Chile readily deployed naval means southwards.²⁶¹ This maneuver contributed to the withdrawal of the Argentine surface fleet since Anaya sought to preserve means to deter and possibly engage the Chilean Navy.²⁶² The FAA also had to divert some of its limited means (a fraction of its dozen or so Mirage 3s) to protect the continent from a possible Chilean attack.²⁶³

The impact of employing less skilled and ill equipped land forces on military capability are discussed fully below. The withdrawal of the surface fleet and part of the aerial means from the war represented, by themselves, a sharp drop in Argentina's defensive military capability. Moreover, Menéndez indicated that the lack of close sea support was another vital element in his decision to surrender.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁷ Matthei in Clavel (2002).

²⁵⁸ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 706.

²⁵⁹ Argentine Government (1983a), pp. 176-177.

²⁶⁰ Galtieri in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 705.

²⁶¹ Tripodi (2003), p. 118

²⁶² Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), pp. 79-80.

²⁶³ Grove (2005), p. 269 and Weber in Argentine Government (1983b), p. 110.

²⁶⁴ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 515.

DEFEAT AT THE UN

Argentina's Chancellor was a distinguished lawyer and academic who had sporadically served in senior diplomatic posts.²⁶⁵ Costa Méndez was not, however, a professional diplomat, nor did he rely on the best possible staff.

The Chancellor's poor judgement, and lack of diplomatic tact and sensibility culminated in ineffective diplomacy before and during the war. On 24 March 1982, when the crisis in Georgia was already in development, Costa Méndez appointed Eduardo Roca as Argentine Ambassador to the UN despite the fact that Roca was not only inexperienced in UN politics, proceedings and personalities but was also in precarious health conditions.²⁶⁶ When Costa Méndez arrived at the UN, on 3 April to garner support among non-aligned UNSC members, against the draft of Resolution 502, he spoke to them rather than consulted them, he brushed aside their questions about the use of force and took their votes for granted.²⁶⁷ In the previous month the Chancellor had arrogantly declared in public: 'Argentina does not belong culturally to the Third World'.²⁶⁸ Costa Méndez's main argument in the UN – that the peaceful resolution of international disputes determined by Article 2 of the UN Charter applied only to disputes that had arisen after 1945 – was also not well received since most UNSC members came from nations involved in disputes that originated before that year.²⁶⁹ Parsons later remarked: 'I could see votes changing in my direction pretty well as he said that'.²⁷⁰

The Chancellor's ineffective diplomacy therefore contributed in great measure to the approval of Resolution 502, which facilitated the foreign embargos on Argentina that, in turn, adversely affected military capability, as previously noted.

²⁶⁵ Graham-Yooll (1992).

²⁶⁶ Toase (2005), p. 160 and Argentine Government (1983a), p. 22.

²⁶⁷ Toase (2005), pp. 159-160.

²⁶⁸ Méndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 657.

²⁶⁹ Toase (2005), p. 161.

²⁷⁰ Parsons in Toase (2005), p. 161.

BACK TO PORT

Within the Argentine Navy there was a specific knowledge gap which proved fatal. In 1979, Vice Admiral Juan Lombardo, Commander of Operation Rosario, had been privileged with firsthand knowledge of US satellite capabilities whilst attending a naval conference in America.²⁷¹ However, Lombardo, and his staff, seem not to have known about the significant limitations of this early US satellite system.

This knowledge gap led to a vital error in strategic assessment on the part of the Argentine naval leadership. Anaya clarified, after the war, that his decision to order the surface fleet back to shallow waters near the continent was based essentially on his assessment, after the attack on *Belgrano* and *Sobral*, that the fast British nuclear submarines were receiving accurate and timely satellite information from the US.²⁷² Anaya's decision had been supported by Lombardo.²⁷³ This was a mistake. According to Green:

All this business about satellites providing wonderful instant coverage round the clock is absolute rubbish especially if you've got bad weather and it's dark. We were given occasional snapshots, which were quite useless as they were too old.... Electronic intelligence from the American radar intercept satellites was very confusing; merchant ships appeared similar to naval ships, and there were also a lot of fishing vessels.²⁷⁴

The Argentine Navy could therefore have maintained at least some surface means in theatre without incurring excessive risk of destruction. Moreover, even before the

²⁷¹ Lombardo in Argentine Government (1983b), pp. 95-96.

²⁷² Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), pp. 750, 775.

²⁷³ Lombardo in Argentine Government (1983b), p. 82.

²⁷⁴ Green in McManners (2008), p. 57.

withdrawal of the fleet, the Argentine Navy failed to transfer even a relevant fraction of 3rd Brigade's equipment due to their overestimation of the adversary's means.²⁷⁵

This poor strategic assessment had drastic effects on military effectiveness in terms of responsiveness, integration (jointness) and equipment. Since the surface fleet had withdrawn, much of the Navy was not available to respond to anything, let alone partake in joint action. 3rd Brigade, of course, was left without *matériel*.

The surface fleet's absence represented, in itself, a sharp drop in defensive military power. The impacts of the absence of close naval support for land forces and the underprovision of 3rd Brigade on Argentine military power have already been noted.

CONSCRIPT ARMY

There was a substantial human capital deficit within the segment of the Argentine Army that was allocated to the Falklands / Malvinas during the war. On 27 May, prior major engagements, the Argentine Army in the islands possessed 10,001 soldiers in total: 7,352 privates (73%), 2,015 NCOs (20%) and 634 officers (6%).²⁷⁶ Privates were conscripts selected by the criteria of gender (male) and age (19 years old), not skill.²⁷⁷ Few bright individuals would have been interested in volunteering as privates since the salary was measly (approximately US\$3 per month) and promotions were limited.²⁷⁸ Privates' military training was poor, as noted above. NCOs were professionals, but did not receive the same level of training or responsibilities found in most West European armies.²⁷⁹ Officers were also professionals, had to pass examinations, and were trained and educated in national military schools throughout their careers.²⁸⁰ However, officer examinations and teaching methods emphasized rote memorization, as oppose to the more enlightened critical thinking approach found in

²⁷⁵ Parada in Argentine Government (1983d), pp. 433, 437.

²⁷⁶ Argentine Army (1983), Tome II, Appendix 21.

²⁷⁷ Stewart (1991), p. 45.

²⁷⁸ Middlebrook (1989), p. 49; Fabian in Kon (1983), p. 173.

²⁷⁹ Stewart (1991), p. 52.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-53.

US and UK schools.²⁸¹ Training in US and Western European institutions was limited.²⁸² The Army's deep historical involvement in politics meant that senior promotions were based more on connections and loyalty, rather than merit.²⁸³ Additionally, most soldiers in the islands belonged to 3rd and 10th Mechanized Brigades, which were not accustomed to the cold weather and hilly terrain of the islands.²⁸⁴ Joint training at all levels was practically non-existent.²⁸⁵

The Army's human capital deficiency directly impacted its defensive military capability in several ways. First, most soldiers did not know how to protect themselves from the extremely cold and humid climate, a fact which provoked a trench foot epidemic. Moore noted that the Argentines 'did not look after accommodation properly – [they were] extremely badly trained and disciplined in that sense'.²⁸⁶ Another British officer observed that Argentine soldiers 'had been living in shelters made from ammunition boxes and corrugated iron. They were under water, their sleeping bags drenched'.²⁸⁷ Guillermo, an Argentine private, admitted: 'neither we nor the officers knew how to set up our position'.²⁸⁸ Major Enrique Ceballos, Director of the Malvinas Military Hospital, noted: 'I received soldiers in the hospital with clothes soaked from top to bottom'.²⁸⁹ To make matters worse, many privates were punished for stealing food by being forced to put their bare feet or hands into puddles of icy water or by being tied to the ground for extended periods with no gloves or headcover.²⁹⁰ From 15 May the number of trench foot casualties began to rise at an exponential rate (Chart 1), culminating in 173 total by the end of the war.²⁹¹

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

²⁸³ Santibañes (2007), p. 621

²⁸⁴ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 501.

²⁸⁵ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 188.

²⁸⁶ Moore in McManners (2008), p. 433.

²⁸⁷ Brown in McManners (2008), p. 440.

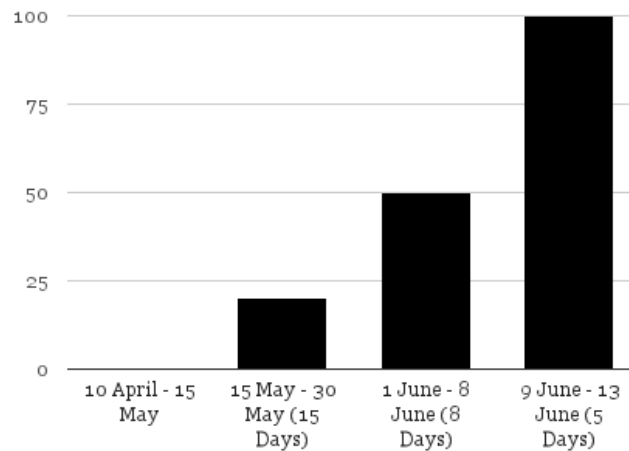
²⁸⁸ Guillermo in Kon (1983), p. 17.

²⁸⁹ Ceballos in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 978.

²⁹⁰ Santiago in Kon (1983), p. 73.

²⁹¹ Ceballos in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 976.

Chart 1. Trench Foot Cases Among Argentine Troops in Malvinas Military Hospital (Estimates).²⁹²



The problem was not lack of adequate clothing. Argentine POWs, taken by the British to warehouses in Stanley / Puerto Argentino, previously (mis)managed by Argentine personnel, reported seeing many sizable containers full with winter clothes, including socks and rubber boots.²⁹³

Second, general disorganization and incompetence prevented many Argentine soldiers at the front from being adequately provisioned with food and, as a result, several men were left incapacitated by hunger and malnutrition. Argentine Air Marshal Hellmuth Weber (Strategic Air Commander), who visited the islands, observed a general state of disorganization among Menéndez's forces.²⁹⁴ Several soldiers confirmed that they and their colleges suffered from food deprivation.²⁹⁵ By the end of the war, Ceballos had diagnosed 14 cases of malnutrition in his hospital (i.e. loss of over nine kilos)²⁹⁶ and noted two deaths from malnutrition in West Falkland / Gran Malvina.²⁹⁷ These numbers were not higher because soldiers regularly stole food from

²⁹² *Ibid.* p. 984.

²⁹³ Guillermo, Santiago and Juan Carlos in Kon (1983), pp. 38, 86, 126.

²⁹⁴ Weber in Argentine Government (1983b), p. 121.

²⁹⁵ Ariel, Santiago, Juan Carlos and Fabian E. in Kon (1983), pp. 43, 73, 118, 159.

²⁹⁶ Ceballos in Argentine Government (1983f), pp. 973-974.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 979.

Kelpers and Army depots.²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, by early June, Ceballos warned Menéndez that, by his estimates, the troops in the islands would not last physically 20 more days due to inadequate food intake, trenchfoot and other environmental conditions.²⁹⁹

The problem was not the absence of food. POWs placed by the British in former Argentine warehouses in Stanley / Puerto Argentino also observed massive stocks of food that had not been distributed to soldiers at the front.³⁰⁰ Privates at the front further complained that their immediate NCOs and officers hoarded provisions at their expense and that they were only properly fed (with Argentine provisions) by the British as POWs.³⁰¹ Moreover, food transportation was complicated by the Army's inability to fix its two Chinook helicopters, since, by the end of the war, there were only two other operating Chinooks from the Air Force. One Army Chinook was not put into service, even though the replacement motor was brought by a Hercules aircraft, and the other was considered beyond repair, even though it was flying 48 hours after the surrender in British hands.³⁰² Additionally, much of the natural food supply in the island (cattle and sheep) near the troops was wasted when Argentine engineers laid mines in disorderly manner through grazing areas.³⁰³

Third, Argentine soldiers, with few exceptions,³⁰⁴ proved to be poor combatants. The Battle of Stanley / Puerto Argentino is illustrative. Conscripts broke down under pressure. One class of 62 private observed: 'those kids [the privates] died in a war for which they were not trained. We were just targets for their artillery: lots of times I felt like a duck on a lake, being shot at from all sides'.³⁰⁵ Indeed, the British were surprised to find, in some cases, Argentine soldiers hiding in trenches with 'sleeping bags over

²⁹⁸ Guillermo, Santiago and Fabian E. in Kon (1983), pp. 18, 73, 163.

²⁹⁹ Ceballos in Argentine Government (1983f), pp. 976-978, 984-985.

³⁰⁰ Guillermo, Santiago and Jorge in Kon (1983), pp. 38, 86, 104.

³⁰¹ Guillermo, Santiago and Fabian E. in Kon (1983), pp. 26, 75-76, 87, 163.

³⁰² Castellano in Argentine Government (1983c), p. 414.

³⁰³ Santiago in Kon (1983), p. 77 and Dorrego in McManners (2008), p. 174.

³⁰⁴ Argentine Government (1983a), p. 188.

³⁰⁵ Guillermo in Kon (1983), p. 33.

their heads'.³⁰⁶ Another Argentine soldier noted that, by the end of the battle, the streets of Puerto Argentino 'were full of kids crying'.³⁰⁷

NCOs and officers failed to also lead. Several privates recalled that their units lacked instructions from superiors and that, in some cases, NCOs and officers were first to retreat.³⁰⁸ Robacio heard Army officers over the radio lines despairing because they could not find their units at night.³⁰⁹

The Argentine resistance and retreat was generally disorganized and inept. Hussey observed friendly fire among soldiers.³¹⁰ Weapons were misused. For example NCOs repeatedly failed with anti-aircraft Blow Pipe missiles for lack of training.³¹¹ According to various eyewitnesses, the withdrawal to Stanley / Puerto Argentino from the surrounding heights was marked by chaos and included soldiers throwing away their weapons.³¹² The 6th and 25th Regiments did not engage in combat at all since they remained permanently in the isthmus of the airport awaiting a British landing in that zone, which never materialized.³¹³ Notably, soldiers from the mechanized brigades had been allocated burdensome bags with straps (as oppose to backpacks).³¹⁴ As a result, many ill disciplined privates abandoned their weapons on march to their positions and therefore voluntarily relinquished their capacity to fight before combat even began.³¹⁵

Stanley / Puerto Argentino was surrendered after only four days of resistance, despite abundant reserves of equipment and provisions. BBC correspondent Robert Fox recalled: 'It was surprising how much stuff the Argentines had; unbelievable amounts of food in containers.... there were about forty upended 105mm howitzers and ammunition boxes strewn all over the place, some with unfired shells and big brass

³⁰⁶ Chaundler in McManners (2008), p. 403.

³⁰⁷ Fabian in Kon (1983), p. 178.

³⁰⁸ Ojeda and Morel in McManners (2008), pp. 358, 399; Juan Carlos in Kon (1983), p. 124.

³⁰⁹ Robacio in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 990

³¹⁰ Hussey in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 901.

³¹¹ Guillermo in Kon (1983), p. 30.

³¹² Santiago, Jorge, Juan Carlos in Kon (1983), pp. 84, 101, 125; Hussey in Argentine Government (1983f), pp. 902, 904.

³¹³ Hime (2010), p. 44; Chaundler in McManners (2008), p. 445; Hussey in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 904.

³¹⁴ Menéndez in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 487.

³¹⁵ Hussey in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 902; Parada in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 432.

shell cases...'.³¹⁶ Menéndez himself conceded, after the war, that by the end of the battle his troops were still generally well provisioned in terms of food, weapons and ammunitions with few exceptions.³¹⁷ As noted in the previous case study, the British lacked any excessive advantage in terms of overall headcount or equipment.

ELITE BATTALION

In contrast to the Army, the 5th Marine Battalion deployed in the islands was well prepared for war in the South Atlantic. The Battalion was coherent, cohesive and all members, even the least trained, were thoroughly exercised in modern combat, including night fighting.³¹⁸ Moreover, the marines were from Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego where climatic conditions 'are even more harsh than in the Malvinas'.³¹⁹ Lombardo considered this unit to be the best he had.³²⁰

The Battalion's superior training and expertise translated directly to robust defensive military capability, despite its eventual defeat. For example, John Kuszley, a British Major in the war, described his encounter with this unit as follows:

The enemy – the 5th Marine Battalion – were well dug-in and waited until we were about 100 metres away before opening fire with every weapon they had. In the ensuing firefight, half my company headquarters got separated, both forward platoons were pinned down and every time they moved forward, took casualties. We continued to be shelled and mortared, and were unable to "win the firefight". Contrary to expectations, the enemy were standing and fighting.³²¹

³¹⁶ Fox in McManners (2008), p. 427.

³¹⁷ Menéndez Argentine Government (1983d), p. 518.

³¹⁸ Robacio in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 990.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Lombardo in Argentine Government (1983b), p. 79.

³²¹ Kuszley in Freedman (2005), Locations 14,156-14,177.

According to Fox the 5th Marine Battalion made engagements ‘very tough and hard-fought because [their] defensive positions were so well laid’.³²² The marines also worked well in joint condition under Army command. According to Jofre, overall commander of the battalion, the marines ‘adapted totally and completely to the necessities and to the orders which they received’.³²³ When the Battalion eventually surrendered, one British Sergeant noted: ‘Quite a few big ones didn’t look defeated at all’.³²⁴ To avoid supplying the enemy the marines destroyed their weapons, by own initiative.³²⁵

The 5th Battalion’s admirable performance can hardly be attributed to *materiél* or headcount. According to Robacio, his unit was generally in similar conditions to the enemy regarding weaponry and had sufficient provisions, but possessed less effective artillery support, inferior headcount during engagements and, most importantly, insufficient munitions which ‘lasted scarcely two days and half of intense combat’.³²⁶

TOP GUN

The FAA possessed a significant surplus in human capital during the war. Its members had been trained by US, German, Israeli and French tutors, including Hans-Ulrich Rudel the record-breaking German WWII pilot.³²⁷ Also, unlike the Army and Navy, the Air Force only began to actively participate in military governments in 1976, as a junior partner.³²⁸ Hence, promotions of airmen to senior ranks was less tainted by politics. Moreover, Weber selected Air Force personnel to participate in the war, in all

³²² Fox in McManners (2008), p. 371.

³²³ Jofre in Argentine Government (1983d), p. 421.

³²⁴ Elliot in McManners (2008), p. 387.

³²⁵ Robacio in Argentine Government (1983f), p. 992.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 988, 987, 990.

³²⁷ Stewart (1991), p. 7; U.S. Navy (1983), p. 52.

³²⁸ Santibañes (2007), p. 621.

professional areas, based on a continuous assessment of technical and psychological attributes.³²⁹

The CANA was also a technically-orientated organization. But, unlike their FAA counterparts, Navy pilots possessed valuable know-how in air-sea combat, which was shared with Air Force pilots in the beginning of the campaign in an intensive crash course.³³⁰ Naval pilots then operated jointly with the Air Force from land bases, after the withdrawal of the surface fleet.³³¹

The human capital surplus of the Argentine pilots directly benefited their country's offensive military power. Despite relatively high losses, Argentine airmen inflicted substantial damage to British forces. During the war, Argentina lost 72 aircrafts.³³² The FAA suffered 17 fatalities, 38 disappeared and 46 injured.³³³ However, Argentine airmen accounted for the damage of 25 enemy ships (7 fatally), which provoked 137 British fatalities in total.³³⁴ Among ships sunk was *Atlantic Conveyor*, as noted previously. Moore, considered this to be 'the most serious loss of the war'.³³⁵ The RM General explained that the tents lost with *Atlantic Conveyor* meant that British land forces risked severe deterioration under winter weather.³³⁶ The prowess of Argentine airmen was also recognized by key officers in the RAF and RN during the war.³³⁷

The successes of the Argentine airmen can hardly be attributed to the quantity or quality of their equipment or technology. Although the Argentines possessed 102 aircrafts versus 42 British Harriers (20 initially), the former in fact could only rely on 12 operational Mirage 3s for air-air combat, some of which were diverted to protect the

³²⁹ Weber in Argentine Government (1983b), pp. 121-122.

³³⁰ Grove (2005), p. 269; Gonzalez (2005), pp. 75-76.

³³¹ Anaya in Argentine Government (1983e), p. 774.

³³² Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 20.

³³³ Argentine Government (1983a), pp. 225-226.

³³⁴ Freedman (2005), Appendices, Equipment Losses.

³³⁵ Moore in Dorman *et al.* (2005), p. 60.

³³⁶ Moore in McManners (2008), p. 311.

³³⁷ Gilbert and Ward in McManners (2008), pp. 104, 209; Woodward (2012), p. 496

mainland from the Chilean threat.³³⁸ Argentine Mirage 5s, dedicated to surface attacks, were under severe pressure to engage targets within few seconds and return to base in the mainland fast, since they lacked air-to-air refuelling capability.³³⁹ More importantly, FAA aircrafts were not equipped with bombs for air-sea attack. The bombs available had fuses set for detonation at inappropriate times and therefore many broke through ship hulls without exploding.³⁴⁰ FAA engineers were able to fully fix this problem, but only by early June.³⁴¹ Consequently, during the war, 60% of bombs dropped by the pilots on British ships did not explode due to inadequate equipment.³⁴²

³³⁸ Goldblat and Millán (1983), p. 10; Grove (2005), p. 269.

³³⁹ Gonzalez (2005), pp. 76-77.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³⁴² Argentine Government (2008), p. 190.

Conclusion

Human capital has often been overlooked among defence and military organizations. This is a mistake because the combination of relevant skills, knowledge and experience of military personnel, civil servants and political leaders can be a necessary source of military power. More specifically, human capital can fundamentally impact military capability directly and indirectly.

The case of Britain in the Falklands / Malvinas War substantiates the above argument. Prior to the conflict, British ministers lacked even basic knowledge regarding the islands. This led to the erroneous assumption that all was well, despite indications to the contrary. As a result, the islands' defences were left in precarious conditions and, consequently, British military power was feeble during Argentina's initial offensive. However, Thatcher subsequently reacted with skilled decisiveness. In particular, the PM made the difficult decision of allowing *Conqueror* to destroy the *Belgrano* in little time and thereby imposed a substantial enemy loss, neutralized an imminent threat and contributed to the withdrawal of the Argentine surface fleet. The British Government also benefited from Cooper's extensive knowledge and experience in crisis management. The implementation of the civil servant's advice made Government decisions fast and effective which, in turn, contributed to the celerity of military operations and, consequently, prevented the deterioration of troops by harsh winter weather. The diplomatic talents of Parsons and Henderson ensured the approval of Resolution 502 and the obtention of full US support. Consequently, the UK received aid from the US and France, which especially enhanced British air power, and allowed the Task Force to operate from afar, by relying on US facilities in Ascension.

Moreover, Lewin's political and military acumen was applied to establish clear and coherent political and military objectives, which in turn improved speed and joint action by military forces. The joint bombardment of Stanley / Puerto Argentino, in

particular, was a key contributor to Argentine surrender. The knowledge and experience of the RN and RAF in organizing and maintaining extended supply lines permitted *Invincible* to engage the enemy without delays and for the Task Force to operate at an extended range. The professionalism of British land forces impacted the country's military power by reducing own losses to poor weather conditions, and increasing enemy casualties through effective combat, despite the absence of a significant edge over the adversary in terms of headcount or equipment. The combined expertise of Moore, Rose and Bell permitted the Argentine surrender to be swift and inclusive of all forces. Edward's fluency in Spanish and South American culture was key in establishing and maintaining relations with Chile, which in turn improved British intelligence, especially on Argentine aerial attacks. Consequently the UK fleet was better able to defend itself.

The case of Argentina in the same conflict also supports this paper's main argument. The dearth of human capital in the Argentine Government's highest echelons led to several defective activities. The British and US reactions to the occupation of the islands was not contemplated or prepared for. As a result, there was improvisation which harmed even food supplies (and consequently troop capacity for combat) as well as psychological readiness for combat, which seems to have contributed to early surrender. Improper objectives were set by the Junta which led to disjointed action, such as air strikes not followed up by land attacks. The Junta initiated conflict at a date that obstructed procurement processes and conscripts' training while aiding enemy equipment decisions. The non-delivery of several French Super Etendards and Exocets proved particularly detrimental to Argentine air power. The Junta also did not meet regularly, and adopted an unclear and complex chain of command that was hardly observed. Galtieri, in particular, ordered (unilaterally and arbitrarily) the transfer of 3rd Brigade, despite logistics complications, thereby deploying a mostly non-operational unit that drained 10th Brigade. Galtieri also

threatened Chile militarily and, consequently, created the need to divert substantial military means from the war to deter Chile.

Furthermore, inexpert diplomacy by Costa Méndez meant that Resolution 502 was easily approved, thereby facilitating foreign embargoes against Argentina. The Argentine Navy's misunderstanding of the limitations of US satellite capabilities contributed to the unnecessary withdrawal of its surface fleet. The human capital deficit in Argentina's conscript Army provoked a physical and moral breakdown of soldiers, through hunger and a trench foot epidemic, even prior to major combat. Also, Combat by most Argentine Army units was ineffective, being marked by disorganization and ineptness. By contrast, Argentina's elite 5th Marine Battalion successfully applied its superior human capital to maintain itself in prime condition for combat and impose a respectable level of resistance to British forces, despite disadvantages in headcount and equipment. The technically oriented FAA and CANA similarly applied their human capital surplus to provoke substantial enemy losses, despite equipment disadvantages.

The findings in this paper provide some broad public policy lessons. First, defence and military organizations (as well as other related institutions) can significantly enhance their country's military capability if they acquire, maintain and develop military and civilian personnel who possess relevant knowledge, skills and experience. The cases explored suggest that there is more than one way of accomplishing this, e.g. competitive Employee Value Propositions (EVPs) (salary and other benefits); recruitment and promotion by merit; first-rate training and education; realistic military exercises; etc. Second, human capital should be recognized and valued for its direct and (often unnoticed) indirect impacts. Third, the underpaid, undertrained and uncommitted manpower usually generated by compulsory military service can be a liability. Conversely, a professional all volunteer force can be an essential asset.

This paper has explored the causal link between human capital and military capability within a specific context: modern conventional warfare in a maritime setting. Further research on the strength of this connection within other contexts would certainly enrich the scarce literature currently available on the subject.

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